



venture out

Venture Expeditions

Operating Procedures

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Section 1 **Introduction**

This booklet is designed as a guideline to provide information as to how VENTURE OUT operates in respect of its outdoor activities. The booklet is an insight into how staff members should operate whilst being an advocate for VENTURE OUT.

Areas that are covered in this booklet range from safety whilst on activities, operating procedures, incident reporting and expectation of staff in general.

VENTURE OUT is constantly progressing and changing. It provides a variety of activities to a large range of people. It is always seeking new opportunities so that it may offer people the chance to take part in adventurous activities, from water to land-based challenges.

Section 2

Roles and Responsibility of Staff Members

All VENTURE OUT staff should reflect the company's image constantly and in a positive manner. Appropriate behaviour and dress should be maintained throughout sessions and also while representing the company.

VENTURE OUT staff should adopt a positive attitude and be constantly encouraging all clients to further their skills in all activities taken. It is also expected of staff to be committed, organised and familiar with VENTURE OUT Operating Procedures, Child Protection Policy and Risk Assessments.

All staff will be required to complete a Staff Details form and show original certificates for all qualifications held. VENTURE OUT will keep a copy of all certificates on file. Instructors are encouraged to gain qualifications at a national level and will be responsible for ensuring that their qualifications and memberships stay valid and up to date. National Governing Bodies may be contacted to confirm validity of awards. New Staff members will undergo an interview and induction and will not work unsupervised until satisfactory references have been obtained.

Staff Update Days will occur annually, so that instructors are made aware of any changes to Policies & Procedures. Throughout the year staff will be kept informed of any relevant changes made to Policies and Risk Assessments via email. VENTURE OUT Instructors usually work in pairs or more, and as such, share good practice and monitor each other for current safety methods. Staff and Instructors will be responsible for safety management during any sessions and will report any concerns to the Health & Safety Officer, Glenn Rees. Further information and guidance can be obtained from the Health & Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety.

For any unaccompanied groups, VENTURE OUT will require completed Medical Consent forms for all members, allowing GRIP staff to act in 'loco parentis'. VENTURE OUT will always provide at least 2 experienced Staff members if the group is unaccompanied.

We will endeavour to provide a VENTURE OUT T-shirt or jacket depending on the job and the weather conditions.

VENTURE OUT asks staff to remember that they are representing the company at all times whilst at work and so they should act accordingly and professionally. We work as a team and as such if anyone has finished their work sooner than one of their colleagues, we all pitch in to help to ensure we all get the job done. If you are unsure of your role don't hesitate to ask.

Section 3

Safe Practice & Organisation

Safe Practice

Activities that contain a high risk or those that have a small risk are still integral parts of the learning process that can be offered to a person through the use of adventurous activities.

A number of elements are needed in order for activities to run smoothly, effectively and above all safely.

- Risk Assessments – will be undertaken on all activities. However, every location is different and even the same locations can change from one visit to the next. It is for this reason that experienced and qualified staff will be used and they will make an on-going dynamic Risk Assessment. Site specific risk assessments should also be referred to before activities, combined with the Control Measures listed any residual risks will be reduce to an acceptable level.
- Group Briefing – will be carried out before activities, participants will be made aware of the risk in taking part in the activity, safety procedures will be addressed and ground rules and boundaries established.
- Equipment Checks – will be made before, during and after all activities, with any defects reported and the appropriate procedures followed.

Safety is concerned with the overall well being of individuals and incorporates health and welfare issues. The duty of care is enshrined in the principal of 'loco parentis' and is adopted within this document. Parental consent and medical forms must be obtained for young people under the age of 18 before they take part in the activities. Duty of care also extends to participants over the age of 18.

Groups and individuals need to be adequately supervised at all times. The degree of supervision required, depends upon experience of the group, nature of the activity, and also includes any leisure time.

A register of participants should be carried out if appropriate. This also ensures that regular counts of the group can be made.

Appropriate personal and group equipment and clothing is recognised as an important safety factor and VENTURE OUT will provide equipment when and where appropriate.

Judgement by members of staff on the spot is encouraged. The activity instructor has primary responsibility for the safety of the group.

Pre-Visits by a VENTURE OUT Instructor will be carried out where an unknown venue is to be used.

All accidents/incidents must be reported to VENTURE OUT's Health & Safety Officer, Kevin Beattie, by submitting a completed Accident Report Form. Important lessons can be learned from incidents and near misses and those lessons will be shared amongst staff. Monitoring and reviewing safety systems is an ongoing task, which should always be evolving and developing to ensure the highest standards are achieved. All staff have a duty to report any problems or suggest improvements as they see fit.

People with Special Needs

People with special needs should be encouraged to participate in adventurous activities at every opportunity.

Staff members should be made aware and be able to cope with any persons who have any physical, mental, sensory and behavioural needs. The Disability Discrimination Act 2004 should be reflected upon.

Allow sufficient time at all stages of the activity. The roles and responsibilities between the instructor and the parent/group leader may need to be addressed before hand. Instructors who are experienced in this field will in general be employed, but training may be offered to other staff members as part of their development within VENTURE OUT.

Close attention should be given to medical and dietary needs with emergency procedures in place. A system of communication may need to be agreed, before an activity, between instructor and participant.

Child Protection

Consent will be obtained from all VENTURE OUT staff to seek information from the Disclosure & Barring Services; any related incidences after such screening should be made aware to VENTURE OUT. Satisfactory references will be obtained before staff members are permitted to work unsupervised.

All staff members (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview, carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations according to VENTURE OUT's partner organisations. All staff members and volunteers should receive an induction, during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified. Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.
- They should read, understand and follow VENTURE OUT's Operation Procedures, Child Protection Policy and Risk Assessments.

Further information can be gained via Child Protection Training & Safeguarding Children Courses, which staff will be made aware of and encouraged to attend.

Health and First Aid

All staff will hold a suitable up-to-date first aid qualification, and have a responsibility to gain knowledge of current first aid procedures. The level of knowledge will depend upon :

- Nature of the activity
- The environment in particular remote areas
- The health of the group

For all activities and journeys instructors should possess an appropriate first aid kit, with contents relevant to the activities they are delivering. Replacement stock can be provided by VENTURE OUT upon submission of a completed Accident Form to the Health & Safety Officer, Glenn Rees. All Accident Forms will be reviewed and Operating Procedures and Risk Assessments adapted if necessary. The Health & Safety Officer will be responsible for reporting to RIDDOR any injuries or incidents that fit the criteria.

Equipment

Many outdoor activities will require participants to wear warm or waterproof clothing and footwear, depending upon the type of activity and the prevailing weather conditions. VENTURE OUT can provide spare warm fleeces, waterproof jackets and trousers if necessary. We also have a selection of walking boots that may be used.

VENTURE OUT will provide participants with any necessary Personal Protective Equipment that may be required for activities. Some equipment may be supplied in partnership with other activity providers, but all PPE will meet the following criteria :

- Good quality products which meet current safety standards.
- CE marked in accordance with the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002.
- Properly assessed before use to make sure they are fit for purpose.
- Safety checked in line with the maintenance schedule and manufacturers recommendations.
- Maintained and stored properly.
- Fitted and adjusted correctly for participants.

Any damaged or faulty equipment will be removed from use and recorded as such, until such a time when it can be repaired or replaced if necessary.

All PPE will have a thorough safety check at least every 6 months, by a suitably qualified or experienced person. The results of these checks will be recorded in the Equipment Maintenance Schedule.

Section 4

Activity Management

This section details the various activities undertaken by the VENTURE OUT team. The information relates to safety, operating, staff ratios and emergency procedures. Generic risk assessments for each activity are included within the appendix, and site specific should be carried out or viewed prior to sessions.

The adventurous activities that VENTURE OUT provides are:

- Canoeing & kayaking
- Improvised raft building
- Hill walking
- Off-road cycling
- Orienteering
- Rock climbing & abseiling
- Archery
- Gorge walking & ghyll scrambling

Canoeing and kayaking

Staffing

The minimum qualifications required to lead canoe or kayak sessions varies depending upon the type of water being used, and are defined as follows:

- Very Sheltered Water - quiet canals; very small lakes; suitable sections of slow moving rivers (not weirs or rapids) - Level 1 Coach, with a more senior instructor on site.
- Sheltered Water - small lakes; slow moving rivers (not weirs or rapids); suitable sections of larger lakes; some quiet, enclosed harbours - Level 2 Coach
- Moderate Inland Water – up to grade II rapids; large lakes - Level 3 Coach
- Advanced Inland Water – Grade 2+ to Grade 4(5) rivers – Inland lakes 500m from shore in Force 4 to Force 5 winds

A competent assistant will possess appropriate personal paddling skills and positive group management skills. Leaders are expected to operate within the terms of reference of their awards.

Ratios

On Very Sheltered or Sheltered Water a safe working ratio is 1:8, increasing to 2:16 with a competent assistant.

On Moderate Water, ratios of 1:6 will be a maximum, increasing to 2:12 with a competent assistant.

Risk management

All venues to be fully risk assessed illustrating particular hazards to be taken into consideration, re access, water quality, features, environmental considerations, etc.

Instructors should ensure that they:

- Identify any weak or non-swimmers.
- Are aware of any medical conditions.
- Know the type of group and their previous experience levels.
- Have awareness of any hazards particular to the location.
- Have checked the forecasted weather conditions and water levels.
- Check for correct fitting of all buoyancy aids and helmets.
- Are on the water before the group.
- Ensure that all group members are accounted for throughout the session.

All participants to receive a briefing giving information in the following areas:

- The nature of the session and type of boats to be used.
- Appropriate clothing & footwear to be worn.
- How to correctly fit any required PPE, eg. Buoyancy aids, helmets, wetsuits.
- Safe lifting and carrying of boats and equipment.
- How to sit correctly and how to exit the boat safely.
- To stay together within the given boundaries.
- What to do in the event of a capsize, of yourself or someone else.
- Any hand or paddle signals to be used.

Equipment

All equipment must be stored appropriately, with any damaged/defective equipment taken out of use and reported.

All participants will wear approved, correctly fitting buoyancy aids when on or alongside the water. Individuals bringing personal buoyancy aids must have them checked and approved for use by an Instructor.

Participants will wear helmets for activities when it's considered relevant.

All participants must wear appropriate, securely fitted footwear at all times.

All boats should have airbags or buoyancy blocks fitted.

Open Canoes should have a painter or throwline attached to at least one end of the boat.

Any boat fittings, such as footrests, seats, thigh braces, should be securely fitted and the risk of entrapment eliminated.

If spraydecks are to be used, the release handle should always be visible outside of the cockpit and the capsize drill practised before entering the water.

Improvised raft building

This is a great team building activity which will take place on sheltered, inland waters. It can be a relatively dry activity with the emphasis being on the construction of the raft, or it can be a very wet activity when participants spend more time on or in the water testing their craft.

Staffing

The instructor in charge of this activity should either hold UKCC/BCU Level 1 Coach with Site Specific training or UKCC/BCU Level 2 Coach.

Ratios

The advised working ratio for groups is 1:8. If there is a competent assistant available then the ratios can be increased to 2:16. As with all activities, ratios are determined by the type of group.

Risk management

The instructor is responsible for the following:

- Checking medical conditions and taking appropriate action.
- Identify any weak/non swimmers.
- Ensure suitable clothing is worn including helmet and suitable footwear.
- Correctly fitted buoyancy aids will always be worn on or near the water.
- A safety bag containing 1st Aid kit and Emergency kit should be available.
- Throw line and knife should be immediately to hand.
- Checking the structure and stability of each raft before launching.
- Ensure each member of the group is accounted for at all times, especially in the event of capsize or wet games.
- It is recommended that a safety/throw line is attached to each raft to assist with retrieval.
- A safety boat or canoe should be considered for deep water venues.

Participants should be given a briefing to include:

- The need for safe lifting and manual handling techniques when transporting equipment/finished raft.
- Guidance on design and construction of the raft, including demonstration of appropriate knots, if the group requires it.
 - How to board the raft, safe seating positions and paddle techniques.
 - The need to stay as a group and work as a team to look after each other.
 - Action to take in the event of capsize or collapse of the raft.
 - The importance of personal hygiene with regards to Weils Disease.

Equipment

All Buoyancy Aids and helmets should be visually checked before each use and safety inspected every 6 months, with any damage recorded appropriately. Instructors should ensure that all safety equipment is correctly fitted to participants. Wooden poles, logs, barrels and ropes should be visually checked before each session.

Hill Walking

This section has been split into three sections, Lowland walking and Hill Walking.

Staffing

The minimum qualifications required for this activity depends upon type of terrain to be encountered. Staff must work within the remit of their awards.

Lowland Walking takes place on non-hazardous terrain and instructors need to hold the MLTB Lowland Leader Award or an in-house assessment by the Technical Advisor.

Hill Walking is defined as non-mountainous, easily exited terrain and instructors require either MLTB Hill & Moorland /Walking Group Leader, Basic Expedition Leader or a suitable in-house assessment by the Technical Advisor.

Mountaineering involves remote, exposed, mountainous terrain and instructors will require the MLTB Mountain Leader Summer Award.

Ratios

The advised ratios for all types of walking are 1:10. With a competent assistant the ratios can increase to 2:20 for Lowland or Hill Walking and 2:16 for Mountaineering. As with all activities, ratios are subject to the type of group and the location.

Risk Management

Instructors should apply the following to all types of terrain:

- Plan the route in accordance with the capabilities of the group.
- Ensure there is adequate staffing for the type of group.
- Be familiar with the area and terrain, have knowledge of alternative routes in case of emergency.
- Check the weather forecast and be prepared for inclement conditions.
- Be familiar with relevant Risk Assessments.
- Be aware of any access and conservation issues within the area.
- Ensure all participants have appropriate clothing and the correct foot wear.
- Control the walking pace to accommodate all members of the group.
- Ensure the whole group are accounted for at all times.
- Ensure appropriate safety equipment is carried.
- Brief the group regarding the route and any hazards.

Equipment

All participants should wear clothing and footwear appropriate for the terrain and weather conditions. Instructors should always carry a first aid kit and ensure that other safety equipment is available if required; this could include spare clothing, spare food & drinks, group shelter, map & compass, whistle, etc.

Off-road Cycling

Cycling is a great activity for groups, whether on a skills course or a journey it can keep everyone active and engaged. There are so many different styles of cycling that take place in a wide range of venues from purpose built tracks to country parks, on the roads or out in the open countryside. It gives participants the freedom to propel themselves along and gain a real sense of achievement.

Staffing

Instructors should hold at least the MBLA Trail Cycle Leader, MIAS Level 1 or an equivalent qualification. A competent assistant will have good personal riding skills and positive group management abilities.

Ratios

The safe working ratio for off-road cycling sessions is 1:8. If there is a competent assistant available then the ratios can be increased to 2:12. As with all activities ratios are dependent upon the type of group and the venue to be used.

Risk Management

Instructors should be familiar with any routes used and the relevant Risk Assessments. Routes will be selected based upon the skill and fitness levels of the group. The pace of riding should be controlled to the speed of the slowest rider. Nominate a front and a back rider, from which all group members must stay between. Staff members should be positioned accordingly, regular stops and head counts may be necessary. Participants should be made aware of any specific hazards and any necessary technical riding skills demonstrated.

Equipment

Correctly fitting helmets will be worn by all participants and checked by the instructor. Appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn and spares carried if necessary. Weather conditions will be monitored and local weather forecasts obtained. Instructors must ensure that bikes are correctly fitted for the size of participants. Each session will begin with an 'M-check' to ensure all bikes are mechanically sound. A first aid and repair kit will be carried and other emergency kit available depending upon the route and conditions.

Orienteering

Orienteering can help in the development of people's spatial awareness and decision making processes. It is not especially hazardous, provided venue specific risks are identified and controlled using risk assessments.

Staffing

Sessions must be led by a suitably experienced or qualified instructor, depending on the terrain used. The following is a summary of which qualifications are relevant for which areas :

School grounds/small areas – in-house trained staff member.

Permanent Course/Country Park - Walking Group Leader, Hill & Moorland Leader, Basic Expedition Leader or BOF Level 1.

Low Level Terrain - Walking Group Leader, Hill & Moorland Leader, Basic Expedition Leader or BOF Level 2.

High Level/Mountainous Terrain - BOF Level 3 or Mountain Leader Award.

Ratios

Safe working ratios will be dependent on the group and the type of course, use 1:10 or 2:20 as a guide for good practice.

Risk Management

Orienteering can be applied to various different environments and these individual factors must be considered and addressed in the group briefing :

- Course planning should reflect the groups experience, age, skills and fitness levels.
- Navigation techniques should be taught, with beginners working in groups of at least 3.
- Checkpoints and out of bound areas should be explained during briefing.
- Specific hazards e.g. low branches, slippery rocks, etc. must be pointed out.
- Employ an appropriate method to ensure awareness of location of participants.
- Participants should be aware of finish times and signals to be used.
- First aid & emergency procedures should be understood by all participants.
- Country Code & expected behaviour around members of the public.

Equipment

Participants should wear clothing and footwear appropriate to the weather conditions and venues to be used. A first aid kit should always be available.

Rock climbing & abseiling

This section covers rock climbing and abseiling, both indoors and outdoors. Indoor climbing can provide an opportunity throughout the year for individuals to exercise and develop their learning and enjoyment of climbing.

Staffing

Leaders must hold a relevant MLTE qualification, Single Pitch Award or higher for outdoor sessions, Climbing Wall Award or higher for indoor sessions. Competent assistants should be able to fit harnesses and helmets correctly, tie the rope into the harness with an appropriate knot and belay safely.

Ratios

The advised working ratio for groups is 1:10. If there is a competent assistant available then the ratios can be increased to 2:16. As in all activities the ratios for climbing and abseiling is subject to the type of group and the location.

Risk management

- Site Specific Risk Assessments will be carried out for each location used.
- Helmets must be used at all outdoor venues.
- A safety rope will be used for abseiling.
- All equipment should have the appropriate CE marking and manufacturers' recommendations should be followed.

Leaders should have a clear understanding of access and environmental issues concerning any venues used.

Indoor venues can offer specific new opportunities for teaching and practice. Instructors should view individual climbing wall guidelines and apply them to sessions. Indoor climbing walls are especially busy during weekends and winter evenings. Careful supervision of the group is needed so as to avoid accidents and an appreciation of other users should be passed onto the group, in order to avoid conflict.

Equipment

All equipment should be checked before, during and after each use. If any damage or faults are found items must be removed from use and reported by the appropriate means. All ropes, helmets and harnesses are subject to a thorough safety check at least every 6 months, and will be replaced as often as deemed necessary in the manufacturers' recommendations.

Archery

Archery is an activity that can be enjoyed by a wide range of people, including individuals with physical disability. It is, however, an activity that requires a high degree of risk assessment prior to sessions due to the obvious dangers to participants, spectators and others. All sessions must be supervised to GB Archery guidelines and Operating Procedures.

Staffing

A minimum of GB Archery Instructor or GNAS Leader Award should be held by the supervising instructor.

Ratios

1 qualified member of staff to a total of 4 people shooting at one time.

Risk management

Thorough inspection of the area prior to the session is necessary, in order to maximise safety. The following should be identified before each session, referring to GB Archery guidelines:

- Shooting area
- Back drop to target
- Public control measures
- Safety zones
- Positioning of targets
- Equipment required

Equipment

Equipment must be regularly maintained, paying particular attention to the condition of strings, arrows, safety net and the availability of exclusion taping, signs and personal protective equipment.

Refer to Rules of Shooting - GB Archery.

Gorge Walking / Ghyll Scramble

Whether ascending or descending, wet or dry this activity can prove to be a wonderful experience to all, but presents a series of different challenges and risks. These challenges can include walking and scrambling over loose slippery rocks, clambering up, over and under large rocks and waterfalls or wading and swimming through water.

Staffing

Depending on the venue and purpose of the session, instructors should have as a minimum, first aid certificate, prior knowledge of the gorge/ghyll and understanding of the Site Specific Risk Assessments. Instructors should have specific knowledge regarding hypothermia and drowning. They should also have gained experience operating in strong flows of water and be experienced using ropes in and around water.

A competent assistant may be used, they should be confident moving around the terrain, first aid qualified and have good group management skills.

Ratios

Constant visual of all group members is needed. In low water conditions a ratio of 1:8 should be employed, in higher water levels a ratio of 2:12 should be the maximum.

Risk Management

Communication between group members and staff is vital. Instructors should make constant judgement calls regarding the route to be taken and precautions employed. Efficient movement techniques can be demonstrated to enhance personal abilities such as balance, dexterity and co-ordination.

Weather conditions up to and on the day should be monitored and if necessary an alternative venue or activity should be considered. Water levels must be assessed on arrival and monitored during the activity, curtailing or amending the activity as necessary.

Access agreements must be understood and adhered to at all times.

It is important that instructors prevent themselves becoming too cold whilst on session, and should employ appropriate techniques to prevent this.

Equipment

All participants should wear helmets and appropriate clothing and footwear. Harnesses, ropes, buoyancy aids and wetsuits may be required depending on the venue, water levels and temperature.

For all venues a waterproof safety sack should be carried containing the following items :

- First aid kit
- Group shelter
- Emergency phone
- Warm drink
- Spare sugary food

Section 5

Further Information / Contacts

Further information and guidance can be found on the following websites:

ALA - www.aala.org

BCA - www.british-caving.org.uk

British Canoeing - [//www.britishcanoeing.org.uk](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk)

BMC - www.thebmc.co.uk

BOF - www.britishorienteeing.org.uk

DfES - www.dfes.gov.uk

The Equality Act 2010 - www.direct.gov.uk/browse/disabilities

GB Archery - www.archerygb.org

Venture Out – <http://www.venture-out.co.uk/>

HSE - www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety

British Cycling - <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/education>

MIAS - www.mountainbikeinstructor.com

MLTE - www.mlte.org